

February 12, 2021 - "I've seen Fire and I've seen Rain"

Today's flight can best be summed up using the words incorporated by James Taylor into one of his hit songs.

*"I've seen fire and I've seen rain
I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end"*

Today was one such **sunny** day and I thought that I would make one last flight around the local area before leaving my airplane off at the maintenance shop to begin its annual inspection and heading up to the Hilton Head condo for a couple of weeks. On my drive toward the Indiantown Airport I was prevented from entering I-95 South, which is my preferred route, by a police roadblock. The morning TV news had a story about a 3 AM truck fire that caused a blockage just south of the Tradition Parkway entrance to I-95, but that was over 10 hours ago. Why was this major north/south highway still closed? I took back roads to my airport. I had my dog, Becky, with me for this planned one hour loop flight which has me head due east to the coastline at Stuart, FL and then north to my home city of Port Saint Lucie before heading west, for 10 miles or so, and then turning south for the return to my home field. While only about 80 miles in length, by flying at 1,000 feet I have some marvelous views of the south Florida landscape including both canal waterways and the sandy beaches along with their scenic high rise condos and opulent multi-million dollar homes. On the map to the right you can see my actual flight track, as captured from my I-pad, outlined in green.



The air was absolutely smooth and still and the flight was highly enjoyable with me having to communicate with ATC for only for a short time while traversing through the Stuart Airport's air space. Other than that, most of the time my headset was playing melodic music from my favorite Robert Redford movie, "Out of Africa". In that film Redford flies a 1929 DeHaviland Gipsy Moth bi-plane with some stunning aerial footage of the beautiful landscape and the song "Flying Over Africa" in the background. Truly a moving experience and one that I get to relive in almost every flight that I make.



On my way back to the Indiantown airport I came across the cause of the I-95 closure. My first indication was a blockade of that south bound lane by a cadre of 4 Highway Patrol and 4 St. Lucie County Sheriff Dept. SUV's along with a half dozen fire and 2 ambulance vehicles. As I continued the flight I came up to the overturned tanker that had hit another 18 wheeler, had run off the highway and after overturning, burst into fire. So while not actually experiencing the **fire**, I was able to see its tragic aftermath. PS-
No-one was seriously injured in this crash



Just above is a wider view of that overturned tanker truck and the roadblock along with a close-up showing the adjacent tanker, brought in to transfer whatever fuel was still remaining, after the fire had been extinguished.



So, we have covered the **fire** and the **sunny day**, but "what about the **rain?**", you may ask. Well, while there really had been no rain for a while, here in southern Florida, I did come across a scene that left me wondering. **On the left** is a photo of an area with a myriad of ponds and small lakes and, literally, hundreds of motor homes, trailers, 5th wheel RV's, ATVs 4-wheelers & trucks, trucks and more trucks. **Below** is a close up photo showing dozens and dozens of those 4-wheelers, swamp buggies, and ATV's slogging around in man-made fields of wet mud. Just what was going on? I noticed that on one of the building structures was the name "Plant Bamboo" painted on its roof.

After landing I researched that name on Google and found out that it is an ATV Recreational Park that hosts a number of such events throughout the year and this was the weekend for its "Trucks Gone Wild-- Muddy Valentine 2021" For a \$70 per person entry fee trucks can compete for prizes ranging into the thousands of dollars by matching one's mud driving skills with like minded vehicle owners. Now, one thing that we have here in south Florida is plenty of trucks, ATV's and 4-wheelers and more than enough red-necks to drive them. And, while not really one of my things, at least with an airplane I do have the chance to safely and comfortably see the effects of **fire**, "man-made" **rain** with plenty of **sunny days** that just never seem to end.

